

# WORLD VISION INDIA

World Vision India is a Christian grassroots humanitarian organisation that reaches out to the poorest of the poor in India with regardless of caste, creed, race or religion. Through development, relief and advocacy, we strive to create lasting change in the lives of children, their families and communities, living in contexts of poverty and injustice. World Vision began as a small organisation when its founder Bob Pierce, a war correspondent began helping children affected by the Korean War in 1947. Today, World Vision works in 95 countries worldwide. World Vision's work in India began in the year 1958 in a small way in Kolkata. Today, as the country's largest grassroots child-focused organisation, more than 2000 staff work in over 6252 communities, touching the lives of a little over 26.1 lakh children, their families and communities, across 191 districts in 25 states and the National Capital Region.

World Vision India is a registered society under the Tamil Nadu Societies Act 1975, with its National Office in Chennai and monitoring offices in 9 different states. World Vision India is governed by an independent Board with men and women drawn from different parts of the country and from different disciplines. World Vision International has consultative status with UN/ECOSOC (Category III) and is in official relationship with UN agencies, including UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR and ILO.

## STORIES

### 1) Breaking patterns

Amandeep works as a nurse and supports her family. Coming from a community that does not allow women to leave their homes, Amandeep's will power helped her break the patterns of the patriarchal society. She now has plenty of opportunities opening up for a bright future.

Amandeep and her family live in Faridkot, a town on the western fringes of Punjab. Less than a decade ago, young women from the region were discouraged from education, let alone pursuing a career of their dreams. Today, due to various interventions by World Vision India, many of the young women living here are now taking hold of their lives and their future.

Amandeep's sisters, Gurpreet is in the 11th standard and Charanjeet is completing her Bachelors of Education course to become a teacher. Amandeep completed her Multi-Purpose Health Worker (MPHW) training and is now working as a nurse in an orthopedic clinic in the town.



“I never worked as hard as I did during my two years of training. Some nights I barely slept for 3-4 hours, between studying for my exams and my duty roster. But in the end, it was all worth it. Now I may even get a chance to work abroad,” says Amandeep.

All she needs to do now is clear the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test. A big influence that enabled Amandeep to excel is her family -- in particular, her parents. Because the society they live in is strongly patriarchal and women, until very recently, were confined to their homes and barely ventured out of their villages.

Sukhjeet, Amandeep's mother says, “When I was young, the girls from the community were never allowed to leave. Partly because it wasn't considered safe but more so because it was frowned upon by our elders and their conservative values. We had to stay at home and help with household chores. This was why I never had an education”.

Punjab, Amandeep's father also didn't have an education. But that is also why he ensures all his children are educated. “I never went to school because I didn't see the point in going. My brothers went, and today they all hold government postings in the district. I realised my mistake too late and will do anything for my children to complete their education”, says Punjab.

As the new generation struggles to find their feet in the face of financial limitations, they are not ready to give up. They believe opportunities will come, and the important thing is that the doors are no longer shut. That gives them hope to persevere.

“None of this would have been possible without World Vision India. Apart from my course fees, they also raised awareness on gender and equality, which helped to change the views of the community to become more open-minded. We can now face life with dignity and confidence”, says Amandeep.

World Vision India has helped 75 other young women, like Amandeep, from this community to receive training as nurses, of which 48 have graduated and secured employment in various health institutions around the country. The remaining 27 are currently completing their course at the institute.

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## 2) Sanitation

If the boys take pictures of us while we are in the jungle and post it in the media, what will happen to our dignity? For a tribal girl her dignity is everything. If she loses her dignity, her whole household loses respect in the community.

Defecating in the open is not a dignified thing to do but we had to be numb to that notion because it was a necessity. Since primitive times, the jungle has served as our toilet. Women and adolescent girls like me go to the jungle to defecate early in the morning, when it is still a little dark.



This time was appropriate for me because I didn't want anyone to see me defecate, especially the boys and men. Early morning and late evening were times set to go into the jungle for defecating.

Apart from the risk of being caught in the act, I also feared the animals that roamed in the forests like leopards and snakes. One lady in our village recently got bitten by a poisonous snake when she went to defecate and had to be rushed to the Waghai hospital. Such cases instilled more fear in me.

It had become a habit. I took nothing with me from home to clean myself. All I knew was that the tribal people used leaves and stones as tools to clean themselves and as a child I picked up that habit.

When we got back home from the jungle, there was no practice of washing hands or keeping our bodies clean. It was not given much importance. I remember falling sick often either it was fever and vomiting or severe stomach ache and diarrhoea. Constantly falling sick was never a good feeling. It made me feel weak and I felt exhausted. At that time, I didn't know that these illnesses were spread because of unsanitary conditions.

As I grew older I didn't feel comfortable going alone to the jungle to defecate. My mother or sister used to accompany me. When it was just us sisters going to the forest mother used to be anxious for our security the whole time until we returned. She was scared of boys harassing us.

Times have change now. With technology privacy has become more elusive and there is more threat of people posting images on the internet. Puberty made the practice of open defecation more agonizing.

The long walk into the jungle for defecating had become a way of life here so no one realised it was an unhygienic practice. One day the villagers were called for a gathering in the village. My family participated in it.

We were asked what an ideal village would look like by World Vision who organised this gathering. Our village lacked the amenities to become an ideal village and one of those amenities was toilets. People in the village pointed out that they had to go outside, in the jungle to answer nature's call.

It is through the sensitisation programme my family realised the dire need for having toilets in our home. Apart from the ignorance and lack of awareness regarding health issues arising from unclean practices, the economic condition of my household was another deterrent for building a toilet in the vicinity of our home.

But my mother was very keen on building a toilet in the house. World Vision India supported my family in building our toilet. We worked together, they provided the raw materials like cement, bricks, pipes and a toilet seat along with wages for the labourers and we dug the hole and brought stones to make the soak pit.

It is just two months old and I can already experience the advantages of having a toilet in the house. Before it took a 30-minute walk from the village to the forest and then back to the village. Now within two minutes I can reach the toilet. I can go to the toilet whenever I want. It is weather resistant so no matter whatever the weather we can go to the toilet without worrying.

The toilet protects our dignity. Along with using the toilet we have developed a routine of healthy hygienic practices that we learnt at the World Vision sensitization programme.

To promote these practices, we also received hygiene kits which had soap, nail cutter, tooth-brush and paste, comb and sanitary pads.

Washing hands after using the toilet, before eating is a must to protect ourselves from illnesses and maintain personal hygiene. Using pads which can be disposed is more hygienic than reusing cloth during menstruation. Going into the jungle for defecating, ends with my mother's generation.

My generation has started a new tradition and we hope to continue it for generations to come.

### 3) For every pair you purchase, a child's health is at stake

“My work usually involves sticking pieces of the shoe together with glue. The glue has a very strong smell that makes me dizzy and sick when I use it for too long. I can't focus on work sometimes because of this, and the manager gets angry and shouts at me when I make mistakes. He scares me. I fear that my manager will get tired of scolding me and then fire me. How will I support my mother if I get fired?” says 12-year-old Rahul (name changed).



According to a survey, 35 million children in India aged 6-14 are not in school.

Where are they?

Working in hazardous industries or backbreaking jobs so, they can be another earning hand to the struggling family. Looking after younger siblings so parents can go for work and there is food on the table.

Simply at home, because education is a luxury!

Twelve-year-old Rahul lives in Agra.

At a tender age, Rahul had life's challenges thrown at him. He lost his father to terminal illness and since then he had to work to meet the needs of his family. “I liked going to school and if I had a choice I would rather go back to school and learn than work” says Rahul. “Learning was fun and I also had all my friends to play with. It makes me sad to work.” says Rahul recalling his former days when he enjoyed his time with friends at school.

“Ever since my father passed away I've started to work. We had to sell our home to pay for his treatment and whatever was left, we used for my sister's wedding. Unfortunately his illness returned and by then we had no more money left to pay for his treatment,” says Rahul.

Rahul works in a nearby footwear factory for 8-9 hours every day depending on the amount of work. He earns Rs. 100 to 200 a week. Similar to many others like it, the factory has been set up in a residential home to avoid scrutiny from officials. His daily routine starts with waking up by 7, having a bath and eating his food. Then he heads for work by 9 am. In the evening he finishes by 6 pm after which he goes for tuition. He comes home by 7:30 – 8:00, eats food and goes to sleep.

Even though Rahul doesn't handle the heavy machinery there, he still faces other work hazards. The organic solvents present in the adhesives and glue contain neurotoxins. They can alter the normal activity of the nervous system in such a way as to cause damage to the nervous tissue of the child.

“Some children suffer from tuberculosis due to working in closed environments and inhaling toxic fumes” says a World Vision India staff.

“I miss my father. He would always take such good care of us, and my only task was to go to school every day, which I liked. Life is hard with him gone but I don’t have a choice. I have to help look after both my mother and myself now” says Rahul.

“My mother also works as a nanny for a family nearby, but we still struggle with our expenses,” he continues.

“If I don’t work we’ll face many problems. The most important being, we won’t be able to pay the rent for the room and we will also not be able to pay for household expenses like food” remarks Rahul.

Rahul and his mother now rent a single room, which serves as their bedroom, kitchen and store as well. They share a common toilet with the other tenants. Rahul is just one among the millions of children in India, who are forced to work as a child, so that they can provide for the family. According to UNICEF, there are approximately 10.2 million children working in India.

Through remedial education classes, economic development assistance and counselling support, World Vision India works among these children, ensuring that they get back their fair chance to life.

“World Vision India helps me to continue studying by giving me an opportunity to learn at their Remedial Education Centre, where I go for tuition every evening. I’ll always be grateful to them. Hopefully I can complete my education one day and fulfil my dream to become a soldier” says Rahul.

The Remedial Education Centres started by World Vision India teach basic literacy and numeracy skills to children who are unable to read, write and do basic math. This is particularly to ensure that children of higher primary classes (4th and 5th) have strong basic foundations, which impact all future learning. Hindi and Mathematics are being taught. There are 30 children in the centre that Rahul goes to and 3900 children attend centres across Agra.

## 5) In good company

Mohsin’s school bag is his prized possession. And why wouldn’t it be? Till the year 2013, Mohsin was a child labourer at a book binding unit. At an age where he was supposed to read books, he used to carry piles of books tirelessly all day long.

Mohsin, 12, longed to learn to read the books he carried, he wanted to play like the other children but





the financial conditions at home hindered his freedom. Mohsin comes from a family of eleven. He has five brothers and three sisters. His father suffers from Asthma and hence can't provide for the family. His mother does odd jobs for an income.

Many families do not understand the importance of education. They send their children to work assuming their efforts can help sustain the family. But little do they know that this will only bring a temporary relief and that poverty is there to stay!

In 2013, World Vision India began the Meerut Child Labour Project. The programme facilitated the operation of Child Care Centres which identified children who were not going to school and engaged them for two hours in the centre each day.

Children in the Child Care Centre are counselled, assessed and attempts are made to take them out of labour. The staff of the project visits the families regularly to explain the importance of education to them. At the centre, the children are also taught basics of subjects. After a year, once the child is ready, he or she is enrolled in school with support from World Vision India. Post this, World Vision India's Child Tuition Centres serve as an auxiliary support to children who go to school.

Mohsin went to the Child Care Centre in 2013. In 2014, he was enrolled in school and since then Mohsin has been able to see the transformational change in his life. He feels healthier and happier; he has more time to spend with his friends; more time to just be the child he is.

"Now, all I wish is for bicycle; a red one. Some of my friends have their own mobile phones, but I don't want one because I don't know how to use it", says Mohsin innocently.

Child labour is lethal for a child as it limits his or her possibilities and capabilities. Education gives the child a gift of choice; the choice of a better life in a more inclusive world.

"When I grow up, I want to be a police officer!", Mohsin says with his eyes sparkling. "I want to run fast and catch all the thieves. But, I want to finish studying first. Without going to school, I will not become a good police officer.", he adds.

To tackle the issue of meagre income, World Vision India provides livelihood assistance to families through Economic Development Assistance (EDA) by providing sewing machines, buffaloes etc. The project has facilitated the formation of 51 Self Help Groups (SHGs) in the area and provided 109 child labour families with EDA so that low income doesn't become an obstacle for the child's education.

Families are also linked to various services such as Government Schemes for daily wage labourers. So far, 1309 families have got their labour cards and the project was able to register 381 widows who could avail their pension through Government schemes. “Even if there is no money in the house, I will still send Mohsin to school. I will never stop his education.”, says Kanij, Mohsin’s mother. “He smiles more often now, he is happier, I want a good life for my child”, she adds.

“I really like my life now!” concludes Mohsin.